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I. SUMMARY

In the first four months of the grant, IRI staff has worked to build relationships, develop materials, and initiate the programs that will continue through the remaining eight months of this grant. In this quarter IRI initiated the core aspects of the program and is presently working to integrate and regularize their activities. The electoral legal framework working group held its first meeting May 30 and a second in June 2005. The group has regularized its operation and has agreed to meet twice a month to discuss electoral issues. The working group currently has representatives from nearly all of the political parties of East Timor, with the notable exception of Fretilin, as well as representatives from civil society. The working group will begin its formal training process in July.

In the last three months, IRI has identified and approached four universities in East Timor to seek their participation in the internship program. To date, IRI has signed Memorandums of Understanding (MoU) for participation with three universities and another MoU is awaiting signature. Interns from participating universities were selected and orientation for the eight student interns began at the end of June. To establish expectations and work guidelines, IRI staff wrote and translated an intern manual that was distributed at orientation.

In addition to IRI's work organizing and initiating both the working group and the intern program, IRI has also provided educational and orientation materials for both programs. IRI-Washington staff researched and wrote two briefing memos regarding basic aspects of electoral legal framework reform to help inform working group members of key electoral issues. Each of these documents was translated into Portuguese, Bahasa Indonesia and Tetum so that they are accessible to all Timorese citizens.

II. BACKGROUND

The IRI program works toward the USAID Mission's strategic objectives of laying the foundation for conducting future national elections that meet international standards for open and honest elections. The election law presents a landmark opportunity for the political parties, as representatives of the citizens of Timor-Leste, to become fully engaged in the future of their own democracy. Under the CEPPS grant, IRI promotes policy-based political parties by educating political party, civil society, and female political leaders about international electoral law models and their applicability in Timor-Leste.

III. PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

The majority of this quarter has been dedicated to the creation and institution of the working group on electoral legal framework reform. Early in the quarter, much of the work focused on securing the participation of the political parties in East Timor and setting up initial logistics for regular Working Group (WG) meetings. IRI was successful in explaining the importance of a multi-partisan effort during this process and has succeeded in bringing representatives from several political parties, including ASDT, PD, PSD, and PST to the table. Timorese civil society leaders have also agreed to participate, including Teresinha Cardoso from the Women's Caucus, J. Luis Oliveira from HAK, and Joao Cancio Freitas from the Dili Institute for Technology (DIT). IRI has extensively solicited Fretilin participation, through multiple discussions with the party's General Secretary, President, Vice-President, members of the executive political committee, and influential party members but Fretilin representatives have not as yet joined the working group. While Fretilin has not agreed to participate, it is significant to note that Fretilin has not declined to participate either; and leadership has indicated interest in single-party training with the electoral specialist next quarter. Fretilin leadership has also welcomed receiving the agendas and minutes from the Working Group sessions and the IRI electoral briefing memos. IRI will continue to work with Fretilin to find a mode of participation that is acceptable to all parties.

The first meeting of the working group was held on May 30th in the IRI office. The meeting introduced Working Group members to one another, introduced IRI's role as facilitator of the WG, the importance of an electoral legal framework in a democracy and that how they are written affects both short and long-term political participation in a democracy. By talking about what topics individuals were interested in exploring, the WG began brainstorming topics for future discussions and set aside a date in June for the second meeting. Interestingly, participants were most concerned about the lack of Fretilin participation, and WG members strongly urged IRI staff to continue outreach to Fretilin on the importance of a multi-partisan discussion group. IRI assured WG members of outreach to Fretilin, but also suggested WG members also press Fretilin members to participate in order for the message to come from as many sources as possible.

The second working group meeting was held on June 27th in the IRI office. A working group calendar was established, with members agreeing to meet twice a month. Members began by discussing their experiences with elections in East Timor, and began talking about perceived flaws in current electoral administration procedures. Members determined that the third meeting will be used to discuss electoral administration and oversight bodies. In addition to the political party and civil society leaders present at the WG meeting, the eight interns attended the meeting as observers and their role as researchers for the WG was explained. IRI staff is now circulating meeting agendas and past meeting notes to WG members, adding to the between-meetings discussion.

At this second WG meeting, IRI circulated its first memo on the basic aspects of electoral legal framework reform. The document, which was written by IRI-Washington and translated into Portuguese and Tetum, provides members with a basic outline of relevant topics that the working group may want to discuss in the process of creating their framework. This memo proved critical, as it began to shape the direction of future working group meetings. During this quarter the second and third briefing memos were conceptualized and will be ready for working group meetings in July.

During this past quarter the parameters of the intern program were agreed to by participating universities and established. Interns will be supporting the research needs of the working group by drafting research papers on electoral topics of interest to the working group. Due to the technical nature of the research papers and IRI's expectation of high quality work, interns will work in groups of two, producing three papers per group over the course of the next five months.

IRI's intern program has two interns from National University of Timor Leste (UNTL), Dili Institute of Technology (DIT), Peace University (UNPAX), and University of Dili (UNDIL). Of the four universities that IRI approached to help with the internship program, three have signed memorandums of understanding (MoU). One university has not yet signed the MoU, but it is expected that they will in the next reporting period. Initially IRI planned an internship program with close to 20 interns, but in order to ensure a quality experience for the students, IRI found it necessary to limit the number of participants. The group of eight interns, chosen through a competitive process within their respective universities, began their three-day orientation and training on June 30th. Three of the interns are women, and all are under 25 years of age. The orientation taught students the practical aspects of working in an office, how to research and write credible research papers, as well as their responsibilities towards the working group

To support the internship program and ensure that every participant understands the program requirements, IRI wrote, translated into Tetum and distributed intern manuals for all of the interns in the program. The manual discusses intern responsibilities, training opportunities and how grades will be assigned.

IV. RESULTS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Results

1. Led by the political parties, members of civil society and the Timorese government will engage in inclusive, informed debate on the merits of differing electoral legal models, leading to Parliament's selection of an electoral framework that is broadly understood by Timorese citizens, civil society leaders, and political party representatives.

The working group on electoral legal framework reform has met twice already and has decided to meet twice a month in the future to discuss electoral reform issues. Positively, this twice a month schedule was determined by the group itself, as it saw the once a month meeting schedule proposed by IRI as too limiting for the amount of material they wanted to cover. The working group is already broadly multi-partisan, with participants from five of the six major political parties and includes several members of parliament and women. The Working Group also includes participants from civil society, namely from HAK, Women's Caucus and DIT. While debate is still in its initial stages, the forum and participants have been established.

In terms of providing materials for informed debate, IRI has written and translated two memos outlining major topics in electoral reform. IRI has also begun establishing a resource library within IRI's office that will contain materials relevant to the reform process. IRI was pleased to discover a multitude of electoral resources written in Bahasa Indonesian online; interns have been requested to draw up lists of books, articles and materials that IRI can purchase that would be helpful in their research.

2. Foundations for future informed debates are established, transforming how future issues can be debated between political parties, civil society and the Timorese government.

While the working group is still in its initial stages of gathering information, the foundation and venue for informed and multi-partisan debate have been established. The body is now well positioned to begin the necessary discussions for electoral revision and carries the potential for providing a venue for debate over future reforms.

V. EVALUATION

IRI's past work with Fretilin has shown that this party prefers opportunities and training independent of other political parties as a tribute to their special status as the ruling party. For the past quarter, Fretilin has remained true to form and has resisted participating in the working group. That said, the party remains open to discussion regarding the working group, and IRI staff have regularly met with Fretilin officials to discuss terms of their participation. In the next quarter IRI will work to continue to demonstrate the immediate and tangible benefits to Fretilin of participating in the working group. Alternatively, if

Fretilin chooses not to participate, IRI will offer the party materials and programs independent of the working group.

IRI anticipated that the internship program would be slow to evolve, as internships are an entirely new concept to East Timor. IRI has been pleased with the progress of the internship program, which began orientation for the first eight interns at the end of June. IRI has signed MoUs with three universities and is awaiting a signature from a fourth. The readiness of university participation to date has been very encouraging and IRI has high hopes regarding their future participation in the debate surrounding the electoral legal framework reform. This aspect of IRI's programming has proceeded at an ideal pace to date.

VI. FUTURE ACTIVITIES

IRI will hold its first training seminar for the working group next quarter. Roberto Courtney, an electoral specialist whose NGO has been involved with Nicaragua's recent electoral reform legislation, will conduct training in Dili, East Timor from July 24 – July 29. This workshop/seminar will introduce working group members to the structure and implications of various electoral frameworks from selected Asian regional democracies to provide country-specific comparative analysis for discussion. Mr. Courtney will conduct core skills training with the members of the working group, individual political parties, and IRI's electoral interns to establish basic skills for critical analysis of briefing papers and materials, and provide a guideline for members of the working group to constructively evaluate policy. Mr. Courtney will also present several electoral framework options to the working group, and leave behind working papers, briefings, and other relevant material for the working group to continue evaluating and building upon.

The Working Group will continue to meet twice a month for the duration of the grant. The WG decided to discuss electoral administration and oversight bodies at their July 13 meeting; IFES has agreed to allow their electoral consultant to attend this meeting in order to answer questions and discuss different options for electoral bodies. IRI anticipates the working group to continue this pattern of selecting discussion topics in advance and when possible IRI will invite guest speakers to present information to the working group.

IRI will also continue to write, translate, print and distribute to working group members further briefing memos discussing core electoral framework issues. Memos three, four and five are in various stages of completion, and will be ready to distribute in July and August.

In the next quarter, IRI will continue working with universities to implement the internship program. IRI will provide a three-day orientation for the interns in the beginning of July and establish due-dates for the first paper submission. IRI anticipates the first set of electoral research papers by the interns to be presented to the Working Group in mid-August.